



MEDIA RELEASE

Search Warrants Target Illegal Marijuana Operations

SANTA BARBARA, CA – May 3, 2012

On May 2 and May 3, 2012, detectives from the Santa Barbara Police Department assisted federal authorities with the execution of three search warrants within the City of Santa Barbara and one search warrant outside of the city limits. On May 2 search warrants were carried out at the Pacific Coast Collective at 331 N. Milpas Street and at the residence of its suspected operator in Santa Barbara County. On May 3 search warrants were served at an indoor marijuana farm at 305 E. Haley Street and at the residence of its suspected operator. These search warrants were part of a larger, countywide, federal enforcement effort against marijuana operations undertaken by the United States Attorney's Office, Drug Enforcement Administration, and Internal Revenue Service. The effort, targeting illegal storefronts and grows, consisted of search warrants being executed, asset forfeiture lawsuits being filed, and warning letters being sent to people associated with illegal marijuana operations.

Locally, the Santa Barbara Police Department has investigated citizen complaints associated with the existence of storefront marijuana dispensaries since 2009. Detectives have used a variety of means to investigate these locations including interviewing customers, conducting undercover purchases of marijuana, and searching facilities. In every instance thus far their investigations revealed that these storefronts were operating as for-profit business enterprises; conducting retail sales to customers, or "members," and purchasing from wholesale vendors bulk quantities of marijuana grown outside of the region. This is in conflict with California law, beyond the scope of the exemptions set forth in Proposition 215 and S.B. 420, and contrary to the California Attorney General's Guidelines for the Security and Non-Diversion of Marijuana Grown for Medicinal Use.

In the City of Santa Barbara these investigations have resulted in the closure of five dispensaries and criminal charges being filed against the responsible parties. Three of these cases resulted in convictions for sale or possession for sale of marijuana. Two of the cases are currently being adjudicated in the criminal justice system. With regard to the existence of illegal marijuana operations within the city, Police Chief Cam Sanchez states, "We will work within the law and we will aggressively enforce the law."

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